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Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 INSE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02
PM-05 NSC-05 SS-15 L-03 AID-05 VO-05 /096 W
----------097992 210721Z /14
P R 210606Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8551
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 2190

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF TH CA
SUBJECT: NEW CANADIAN BOAT CASE REFUGEE PROGRAM

REF: A) OTTAWA 9788 (1977) B) BANGKOK 30264 (1977)
C) OTTAWA 43 D) KUALA LUMPUR 520

1. SUMMARY: CANADIAN EMBASSY OFFICER DALE WHITESIDE MET WITH THE REFUGEE COORDINATOR ON JAN 20. SHE INFORMED US OF THE NEW CANADIAN POLICY EFFECTIVE JAN 1 TO ADMIN 50 BOAT CASE FAMILIES PER MONTH, WITH QUOTAS FOR DIFFERENT REGIONS IN THE AREA. THIS POLICY IS SCHEDULED FOR A MINISTERIAL ANNOUNCEMENT THE END OF JANUARY, BUT IT IS TO BE LOW KEYED FOR FEAR OF STIMULATING A REFUGEE EXODUS. WE NOTED THAT OUR EXPERIENCE DID NOT SUPPORT THIS FEAR. WE WENT ON TO ASK WHETHER THE CANADIAN PROCESSING COULD BE ACCELEARATED AND DISCUSSED OUR MUTUAL CONCERN FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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INLAND CAMPS. OUR FEELING IS THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THE DEPARTMENT COULD PERSUADE THE CANADIANS TO MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT PRIOR TO THE JAN 24 HEARINGS AS EVIDENCE OF OUR EFFORTS TO STIMULATE INTERNATIONAL-IZATION OF THE EFFORT. END SUMMARY.

2. CANADIAN EMBASSY OFFICER DALE WHITESIDE CALLED ON

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THE REFUGEE COORDINATOR JAN 20 TO INFORM US OF THE
NEW CANADIAN POLICY ON REFUGEES. SHE STATED THAT AS OF JAN
1 THE CANADIAN GOVT HAD DECIDED TO ACCEPT 50 BOAT CASE
FAMILIES PER MONTH INDEFINITELY. THESE REFUGEES WOULD BE
IN ADDITION TO THE PROGRAM OF ACCEPTING 450 BOAT CASE
REFUGEES THAT THE CANADIAN GOVT ANNOUNCED IN AUG 1977. SHE
INDICATED THAT THIS NEW POLICY WOULD BE ANNOUNCED AT THE END OF
JANUARY. WE SUGGESTED THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE
MOST USEFUL IF IT COULD COME PRIOR TO JAN 24.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROGRAM, SUCH AS WHETHER NUMBERS
COULD BE CARRIED OVER FROM MONTH TO MONTH, WERE NOT
YET AVAILABLE. SHE DID NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT OF THE 50
FAMILIES, 35 WOULD BE ALLOTTED TO THE CANADIAN
IMMIGRATION OFFICE IN SINGAPORE (WHICH COVERS
MALAYSIA AND THAILAND), 10 TO MANILA, AND 5 TO HONG KONG.

4. MS WHITESIDE NOTED SEVERAL TIMES THA THE PROGRAM
WAS TO BE LOW KEY, AND RAISED THE CANADIAN CONCERN THAT
WIDESPREAD ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD SPUR GREATER REFUGEE
EXODUS FROM VIETNAM. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE RTG
SHARED THIS FEAR. BASED ON OUR EXTENSIVE INTERVIEWS
WITH REFUGEES, HOWEVER, NONE HAD CITED ANNOUNCEMENT OF
THE WILLINGNESS OF OTHER COUNTRIES TO GRANT ASYLUM
AS A PRIMARY MOTIVE FOR LEAVING. THEIR EXODUS WAS DUE
PRINCIPALLY TO THE FACT THAT CONDITIONS IN THE HOMELAND
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HAD BECOME INTOLERABLE TO THEM. THEY WOULD HAVE LEFT
REGARDLESS OF ANNOUNCEMENTS.

5. WE THEN ASKED HOW CANADIAN PROCESSING MIGHT BE ACCELERATED,
NOTING THAT REFUGEES IN THE PAST HAD SWITCHED FROM THE CANADIAN
TO THE AUSTRALIAN PROGRAM BECAUSE OF THE SLOWNESS OF
CANADIAN PROCESSING. WE DREW THE PARALLEL THAT ALTHOUGH
BOTH GOVTS HAD ANNOUNCED THEIR PROGRAMS IN AUG 1977,
AUSTRALIA HAD SINCE THEN RECEIVED OVER 500 BOAT
CASE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND WHILE CANADA HAD RECEIVED NONE.
MS WHITESIDE ACKNOWLEDTED THAT PROCESSING WAS SLOW, PERHAPS
DELIBERATELY SO, BUT WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC IT WOULD SPEED UP.
SHE NOTED THAT CANADIAN IMMIGRATION HAD APPARENTLY
MADE THE DECISION THAT THAILAND COULD BE COVERED FROM
THE SINGAPORE OFFICE, AND TO DATE THERE WAS NO INDICATION
THAT IT WOULD ASSIGN AN OFFICER HERE TO HANDLE THE NEW
PROGRAM. (REFTEL D INDICATES OTHERWISE. CANADIAN IMMIGRATION
TEAMS ARE TO ALTERNATE MONTHLY BETWEEN THAILAND AND
MALAYSIA).

6. MS WHITESIDE WENT ON TO ASK WHETHER WE BELIEVED
THAT THE THAI WERE REJECTING BOAT CASE REFUGEES AS

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A MEANS OF GETTING US TO FOCUS ON LAND CAMPS. WE
MENTIONED THE PRIME MINISTER'S SEPARATE ASSURANCES
TO PATT DERIAN AND HENRY KAMM THAT THAI POLICY WAS
NOT TO TURN BOATS AWAY. WE ALSO MENTIONED THAT INS
OFFICERS WERE PRESENTLY INTERVIEWING REFUGEES IN
LAND CAMPS. SHE NOTED THE CANADIAN GOVTS WILLINGNESS
TO AID IN RESETTLEMENT, TO WHICH OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE
SUBSCRIBED, AND ASKED WHETHER THE RTG HAD BEEN ANY MORE
FORTHCOMING ON THE RESETTLEMENT ISSUE DURING THE OAKLEY
VISIT. WE SAID NO.

7. MS WHITESIDE LEFT WITH THE PROMISE TO RETURN IN
EARLY FEB WITH IAN HAMILTON, THE CANADIAN IMMIGRATION OFFICER
IN SINGAPORE, FOR A MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE NEW
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PROGRAM. THE DEPARTMENT MAY MEANWHILE WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER
SPARKING A CANADIAN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW PROGRAM BEFORE
THE JAN 24 HEARINGS MIGHT HELP RESPOND TO CONGRESSIONAL
CONCERN ABOUT INCREASED INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE
INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM.
WHITEHOUSE

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